



# MONTEREY NEWS

DECEMBER 1994



## SHAKESPEARE HIGH

Watching high school students perform Shakespeare is not my idea of a good time. When our editor suggested I catch some of the shows being performed by high school students for Shakespeare & Co.'s Fall Festival of Plays, I thought perhaps he had been in the Monterey woods a little too long. However, I'm a big fan of Shakespeare & Co., so I went, I saw, and I'm here to report I have changed my mind!

Shakespeare & Co. (quartered at The Mount, Edith Wharton's Lenox residence) is a professional theatre company offering an array of good to excellent theatre each summer. Unlike many summer companies, they do not fold up their tents and steal away for winter, but remain right here, and work each fall in the local high schools. The ultimate result is a Shakespearean play performed at each school with all the attendant paraphernalia, costumes, lights, etc.

I spoke with Kevin Coleman, Education Director at Shakespeare & Co., who said the Schools Program has been in operation since 1979, and the Fall Festival is now six years old. In most cases two people who have been trained by and are working at Shakespeare & Co. go to each school; sometimes a schoolteacher comes to Shakespeare &

Co. for the summer training institute. The play is chosen by the school or by the directors. The directors work with the students for nine weeks, after which they perform at their own school (about two

seemed to grasp what they were saying. That alone is remarkable. In addition, I was grateful that there was not too much "acting"—the students really let the words carry the intent, without adding to it. Shakespeare & Co. truly has a gift for imparting the language and poetry of Shakespeare to its students.

The second play I saw, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, was performed by students of Monument Mountain Regional High School and directed by Antonio Ocampo and Carey Upton, both from Shakespeare & Co. Monument Mountain has been in the schools program for some time, and the seniors in the group have experience, which was obvious. I thoroughly enjoyed this production. The setting was simple—platforms and arches, with netting hung

at angles across the back, giving the appearance of cobwebs, moonshine, and enchanted woods. The costumes were terrific: the Athenians wore 1940s tuxedos and gowns, and the fairies had fantastic, magical headdresses and masks. Whimsical music cast its own spell.

The play was an excellent vehicle for the students' youthful energy, with a great deal of physical comedy augmenting what was spoken. These actors were having a wonderful time, and they invited the audience to the party. It was raucous, lively, and great fun. I truly



MAGGIE LEONARD

hours on stage), and then take their production to Berkshire Community College in Pittsfield for the Fall Festival, where all the schools in the program perform their plays. Volunteers and staff from CTSB in Lee tape everything for viewing on Channel 11.

I saw two of the ten performances offered. Both productions were well staged, with plenty of physicality, and in each the directors used the youthful energy well; the cast appeared relaxed, and fight scenes were quite active. For the most part the actors spoke clearly, and



laughed so hard I had tears streaming down my face.

Every single person, from the smallest walk-on to the principals, was excellent. Everyone was clear, well-spoken, and we knew what was happening all the time. The actors playing the young lovers were absolutely perfect, full of the silliness and awkwardness of their age. Hermia (Cecily Gould) was small, dark, and determined; Helena (Helena McCracken) was tall, light, and had a wonderful ironic sense. Lysander (Yogen Kushi of Monterey) was small, with a great, deep voice, and both he and Demetrius (Jeremy Gage) had a marvelous sense of their bodies. I was amazed at the maturity of the actors playing Oberon and Titania, Stephen Root and Catherine Belcher. The five Pucks (Adam Boshe, Maria McMann, Marta Roberts, Eoin Higgins of Monterey, and Sarah Zukowski of Otis) were blithely amoral, as only true fairies can be, unconcerned with anything other than what amused them at the moment. They radiated the fairy spirit. And oh, what a marvelous group of players! They were just as written. They assumed their part was the most important, and surely when they were on stage it was. Curtis Challenger, playing Bottom, came very close to stealing the show with this troupe (not an easy task). Bottom was completely convinced of his wit, his brilliance, and his ability to charm. I was also impressed by Curtis' ease on the stage. I wish I had the space to talk about each actor, because they all deserve special mention.

Altogether, this was theatrical magic: everything worked, and I was transported into the great world of the imagination. The comedy was broad, it was mad, and I was enchanted. Bravo to one and all!

Seeing these plays made me realize how easily we become jaded by seeing

practically anything we desire at the flick of a dial, on small screens and large. We have forgotten the power of sitting in a darkened theatre with real people projecting their hearts and minds out to us. There is no substitute.

When I think of all the bad news we get about young people, and I see the enthusiasm, energy, and care these high school students put into their plays, I feel hope. I often wonder what I can do in the face of our seeming hurdle to the end of civilization. Here is something we all can do—support Shakespeare & Co., support the schools and students who participate in this event. It is a small thing, but it makes a big difference. I'll go again next year, looking forward to a good time.

— Nicky Hearon

## MONTEREY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM ESTABLISHED

The Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation (BTCF) announces the formation of The McLaughlin-Wilson Scholarship Fund, its newest Donor-Advised scholarship program. The fund has been established by Miss Edith L. Wilson in her name and the name of Miss Margaret S. McLaughlin.

Miss Wilson's love for Monterey, and especially its youth, led her to create the fund so that Monterey residents graduating from high school could have financial help for their further education. The scholarship program will begin providing funds in the fall of 1995. Application forms will be available in January at the Monterey Library, school guidance offices, the Great Barrington Savings Bank Trust Department, or by calling the BTCF office (413-443-2501).

Eligibility requirements include Monterey residency for the majority of both the junior and senior years of high school (an exception will be made for boarding school students), and graduation in good standing, with preference is given to current graduates. Merit will be the primary criterion for the scholarship awards, but need and other factors will also be considered.

A five-member Scholarship Advisory Committee will decide who receives the awards. The Committee will consist of the Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee member from Monterey, a Monterey Library Trustee, the Librarian of Monterey, a member of the Monterey Board of Selectmen, and a Monterey Parks Commission member.

The Scholarship Advisory Committee will meet in May, 1995, to make the first scholarship awards.

According to Miss Wilson, "Monterey is a spirited village where intelligent children grow. Miss McLaughlin and I have enjoyed their progress over the past half century. It is now my privilege to give the McLaughlin-Wilson Fund to aid Monterey's young adults in their future education. Good life and good luck!"

Virgil Stucker, Executive Director of the BTCF, says, "Having been a resident of Monterey for fourteen years, I am particularly pleased that Miss Wilson has chosen our community foundation to help her meet her philanthropic dreams for Monterey residents in perpetuity. She is leading the way, showing the community an effective way to help develop its youth."

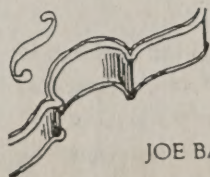
Others are invited to join. Every tax-deductible donation (payable to "BTCF McLaughlin-Wilson Fund," P.O. Box 308, Great Barrington, MA 01230) will be gratefully received.

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FRAN AMDON

## PARKS COMMISSION NEWS

### New Playground

The spirit of community and cooperation that is the essence of Monterey, and which makes this town such a special place to live, was in high gear on the weekend of October 29 and 30. A large group of skilled volunteers gathered to assemble our new playground. With thoughts of our children and the future of the town in mind, the weight of the work dissipated into mild euphoria. Working side by side with neighbors for a com-

mon purpose is very satisfying! Although this project had a beginning and an end, the spirit lives on. The Parks Commission depends on volunteers to carry out its programs, and on everyone for funding. We get to work together with our friends and neighbors on projects from which everyone benefits, and that is the reward for the job. Thanks again to everyone. Catch the spirit!

### Skating Rink

Now the attention of the Parks Commission turns toward preparation of another "playground," the skating rink. For the past three Sundays volunteers have been painting, setting up the boards around the rink, hanging new lighting fixtures, fitting new rubber mats in the changing room, and making other preparations for the skating season. The new look of the pavilion truly reflects the generosity of all who have contributed their time, money, or both.

To make skating at the rink even better, this winter the Parks Commission will offer a weekly Monday evening clinic on the basics of skating, starting December 19 (dependent, of course, on cold weather). Joe Milan, a former collegiate player, coach, and power skating instructor, will teach the clinic. Joe is currently also involved with the Sheffield Youth Hockey League. ALL AGES are wel-

come to attend, 6-7:30 p.m., for instruction on such basics as edge control, pivoting, and power skating. The clinic is free, and we urge all who can stand up in their skates to attend.

For those who do not have skates, the Commission is initiating another program, of sorts. We are appealing to anyone who has quality skates which are not being used to donate them for use by someone in need through a skate exchange. If you have or need skates for yourself or anyone in your family, contact one of us listed below.

At our recent meeting, the Commission was struck with the notion that perhaps there exists unwanted cassette audio tape equipment which may be suitable for use at the rink. If you have any such equipment, or speakers you no longer want, they may be just what we need. For information on any of the above topics, call Tom Rosenthal at 528-9380, Mick Burns at 528-1573/269-6162, or Jim Thomas at 528-0542. ALL SKATE!!

— Mick Burns  
Jim Thomas  
Tom Rosenthal

Monterey Parks Commission



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FRAN AMDON

*Tom Rosenthal thanks the god of  
playground weather.*



## CHURCH NEWS

The Monterey Church at the moment has no minister. Or has it? If you mean minister in the technical sense of pastoral leader, then I would have to say this is true. But in the broader sense, I'm not so sure.

What makes a minister? What are the qualifications needed to minister? If we consider the "ministers" of Jesus' time, we all qualify... We, the People of God, who Love and Serve the Lord... we all have the capacity to minister. What, then, does it mean to minister? To care for the sick, the needy, those hungering in body and spirit, to give of ourselves to someone else. Sometimes it means just a smile or a friendly hello, or lending a shoulder to cry on, giving support to each other in time of need. Sometimes it means giving a lot more than that. But it seems to me that ministering just comes from the heart, a sharing of love for each other and for God, Whom we serve.

And if we consider "minister" in that sense, the Monterey Church is blessed with many.

We are moving ahead in the ministry of the Church. We have been focused, over the last months, on the search for a pastor, and now we are looking into other areas of church life, putting some of our energies back into the effective function-

ing of the Church, even without the leadership of a pastor.

We recognize that an education program has been lacking for the children of our Church families and are actively looking at ways to fill that need.

The old pipe organ is coming to life again! It hasn't been used for Sunday services for many years; it needs work and repair—but through the efforts of Mari Makuc the organ is being revived. It still needs more work, but Mari is getting sounds that literally fill the Church on Sunday mornings.

The recently formed Prayer Chain is proving to be effective. If you have a prayer concern, or would like to become part of the Prayer Chain, please contact one of the people whose numbers are listed below. "WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED IN MY NAME..."

The guest ministers for November were Reverend Henry Hagenah, MaryKate Jordan, Kathy Duhon, and the members of the United Church of Christ. The first Sunday in Advent was celebrated on November 27 with members of the UCC. Subsequent Advent Sundays are scheduled as follows: December 4, Reverend Roy Hanson; December 11, Kathy Duhon; December 18, MaryKate Jordan. Directly following the service on December 18, worshippers are invited to bring a batch of cookies to share and join together in the Social Room for an hour or so of refreshment and music of the season.

The annual Christmas Eve candlelight service will take place at 7 p.m. in the Sanctuary. The whole Monterey community and friends are invited. On Christmas Day, the worship service will be led by the Reverend Carol Towley.

— Judy Hayes

## THE TOWN

Town Clerk Barbara Swann reported that 358 of Monterey's 508 registered voters voted in the November election. She was delighted with these numbers, which far exceed the national average. By now most citizens know who and what won, but it is interesting to see how voters in Monterey cast their ballots.

In the race for the U.S. Senate, Kennedy (D) received 230 votes, Romney (R) 119, Libertarian candidate Dosier received 7 votes, and no one voted for the candidate from the "Larouche Was Right" party. In the Governor's race, incumbent Weld (R) had 187 votes, Roosevelt (D) trailed with 156 votes, and Libertarian candidate Cook barely made a showing with 4 votes. In the battle for State Representative, Hodgkins (D) carried Monterey with a whopping 254 votes to Johnson's (R) 94 votes. Monterey voters gave a resounding yes to the referendum on gun control (gun buy-back program, gun victim compensation, prohibition on mail order guns, and requiring all residents to abide by Massachusetts gun laws) with 235 residents in favor and 88 opposed. The vote on the western Massachusetts by-pass question was close: 174 residents in favor the by-pass and 135 opposed. Montereyans came out strongly in favor of safety belt regulations, 252 for and 92 opposed. The referendum on term limitations, which won statewide, was voted down in Monterey, with 204 opposed and 130 in favor. The graduated income tax proposal carried, 223 for and 116 against. We voted yes on the gas tax question, which would reserve gasoline taxes for highway maintenance, with 231 in favor and 102 opposed.

On November 21 the Select Board held a public hearing at 7 p.m. in the town offices, to obtain public input on the assignment of house numbers and road names for use in the E-911 listings. The hearing attracted few townspeople, but the Select Board took the opportunity to review the listing with Chief of Police Gareth Backhaus, Highway Superintendent Don Amstead, and Town Clerk Barbara Swann. The purpose of the list is to supply emergency personnel with the

### **Monterey United Church of Christ**

**Sunday Services • 10 a.m.**

#### **For assistance & information:**

Bob Emmel (Clerk, Trustee) 528-1321  
Tom O'Brien (Trustee) 269-7471  
Judy Hayes (Worship) 528-1874

#### **With a prayer request, or to join the Prayer Chain:**

MaryKate Jordan 528-5557  
Mary or Ray Ward 528-9243  
Judy Hayes 528-1874

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names and addresses of Monterey residents. The Select Board unanimously voted to accept the road names as they appear on the E-911 listing.

The Select Board announced that the following roads or road sections will not be plowed or sanded from December 1, 1994 until April 1, 1995: Wallace Hall Road (entire road); sections of Beartown Mountain Road, Brett Road, Carrington Battelle Road, Chestnut Hill Road, Fairview Road, Gould Road, Mount Hunger Road, Swann Road, and Wellman Road. On Monday, November 21, in response to an inquiry by the Select Board, Highway Superintendent Don Amstead reported that the snow plows were ready for action. When asked by some snow-lovers at the meeting for a forecast, Amstead replied that "the jet stream is back where it should be," and cold

weather would be coming. Monterey's first snow fell two days later.

Finance Committee members Greta Cherneff and Jack Ryder met with the Select Board to discuss the pros and cons of appointing a Salary Committee in preparation for the 1995 Town Meeting. The Salary Committee researches and compares the salaries offered in Monterey with those of the surrounding towns in order to set the rate of pay for the following year. Selectman Stefan Grotz said that although he was not involved with the previous Salary Committee, it was clear to him that it was not successful, since the entire committee quit. Grotz emphasized that he did not want anything like that to happen again. Selectwoman Georgiana O'Connell said that she had sat in on the previous Salary Committee as an observer; according to

her, the committee worked quite hard and none of their recommendations were followed. Jack Ryder said that the Select Board could elect not to have a Salary Committee, but if they did appoint one, they should be prepared to follow its recommendations. The Select Board voted to table the discussion and postpone a final decision.

It was unanimously voted by the Select Board to appoint Howard (Mick) W. Burns, Jr. to the Conservation Commission for a term ending June 30, 1997. On the recommendation of the Library Trustees, the Select Board unanimously voted to appoint William Marsh as a Library Trustee for a term ending May 6, 1995, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Mark Mendel.

— Maggie Leonard

## SKATING RINK SCHEDULE, WINTER 1995

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
9 a.m.	ADULT HOCKEY	OPEN SKATING					KIDS' HOCKEY
10							
11							
12 noon		OPEN SKATING / STICKS ALLOWED					KIDS' HOCKEY
1 p.m.							
2							
3		SKATING CLINIC					KIDS' HOCKEY
4							
5		ADULT HOCKEY					
6							
7							
8		ADULT HOCKEY				ADULT HOCKEY	OPEN SKATING
9							



## PTA NEWS

The New Marlborough/Monterey PTA will hold its annual Holiday Craft Fair on December 10, 1994, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at New Marlborough Central School in Mill River. The fair is a major fundraiser, and this year it will feature crafts made by the students of the Monterey Kindergarten and New Marlborough Central schools, a Christmas tree sale in the parking lot, local craft exhibitors, a giant raffle with prizes donated by local merchants and community members, a Cookie Walk with cookies available to buy, a visit from Santa, and crafts children can make at the fair—they may decorate a hat, make a puzzle, make ornaments or other sculptures of clay, and make animals or gold angels from paper. Adults can just browse, or take a turn at making something themselves. Instead of baking dozens of cookies, you can buy home-made cookies at the Cookie Walk!

Proceeds from the Craft Fair will be used to fund enrichment programs at the Monterey Kindergarten and New Marlborough Central schools. All the children attending the two schools benefit from the PTA's fund-raising. Among the programs we have sponsored in the past are Young Audience Concerts, RIF book distributions, a scholarship for a graduate of Mt. Everett High School who attended Monterey and New Marlborough Central schools, Star Lab, nature units with Bonner McAllester, fourth grade Recognition Day, karate classes after school, a kindergarten trip to The Bidwell House, and the purchase of library and classroom books.

— Karen Sawers

## COUNCIL ON AGING

The Southern Berkshire Elderly Transportation Corporation (SBETC) provides transportation for seniors and the handicapped. The corporation relies upon state and local grants, appropriations from the towns served, donations from the public, and contributions from riders who use the vans. The Town of Monterey contributes funds in support of this service.

Riders may use the service for medical and dental appointments, outpatient hospital visits, shopping, adult day care, meals and activities at the Great Barrington Senior Center. If you need such transportation, call 528-4773. The van makes stops in Monterey on Mondays and Thursdays for the luncheon meal served daily at the Senior Center in Great Barrington. Reservations for meals are required; call 528-4118.

NYNEX is offering a free program in Massachusetts that will improve statewide telephone communications to and from persons with disabilities. Those eligible are people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech, vision, or mobility impairments. The applicants must reside in Massachusetts and subscribe to residential telephone service. To receive the equipment, the applicant's condition must be certified by a health professional. If interested, contact Terry Koldys at the Great Barrington Senior Center for an application; call 528-1881.

Thirty-seven people received free flu vaccine shots at the Monterey town offices on November 7.

— Pauline Nault



At work on the rink.

MAGGIE LEONARD

## LIBRARY FILM SERIES

The Monterey Library will again offer its annual mid-winter 16mm film series on four Saturday evenings in January and February. Films will be shown on January 21 and 28, and February 4 and 11 at 7:30 p.m. in the library basement. Admission is free (donations, however, are welcomed!), and there will be popcorn and apple juice available at nominal cost.

At press time the schedule was still uncertain, but the movies being shown this year are *Cat Ballou*, *Modern Times*, *Rebecca*, and *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. Precise information will be given in next month's *News*, or call the library at 528-3795 for full information.

— Eileen Clawson

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# DEMOCRATS STUDY SMALL TOWN MANAGEMENT

## Part Three: Money Matters

This month we look at the boards and individuals who deal with our town's money: the Assessors, Tax Collector, Accountant, Treasurer, and Finance Committee. Although they work independently of each other and the Select Board, their work depends on mutual respect, close exchange of information, signatures of approval from the Selectmen, and ultimately the electorate at Town Meeting. Cooperation among them is a built-in discipline. This report is a sampling of their responsible interactions.

In brief:

The Assessors establish the "taxable value of the town," supervise the "commitment" of all tax bills to the Tax Collector, and notify the Accountant of the amount of funds to be collected.

The Tax Collector sends out tax bills calculated by the Assessors and prepared by the state. He collects payments, thereby making the funds available to the town.

The Finance Committee studies current activity and future planned expenses of all departments, develops our budget, and notifies the Accountant of its findings.

The Accountant records bills and receipts for all departments, studies the budget, and reports trends from year to year.

The Treasurer writes the checks paying bills and salaries, deposits town monies in insured banks, and invests town monies.

We, the electorate, pay our tax bills and vote at Town Meeting on how our money will be spent.

Every town has four main sources of income: real estate tax, personal property tax, motor vehicle excise tax, and reimbursement for state-owned land in lieu of taxes. There are others (for instance, utility companies pay taxes on their privileged use of land), but they are relatively minor.

Real estate tax is the largest source of revenue for our town; it is assessed within strict state guidelines. The Assessors apportion taxes among town proper-

ties. Their valuation of real estate is based on the amount of land in a parcel, the improvements and buildings on that land, and frontage on roads.

The actual value of acreage, based on property sales of the previous year, is determined every three years, as required by the state. The valuation of the buildings is based on square area, the grade or quality of building and finishing materials, and the overall condition of each building. Additions and improvements increase a building's value.



All personal property is subject to taxation under Massachusetts law. However, certain personal property is exempt, such as furnishings in one's legal domicile. Consequently, furnishings are taxed only in second homes. The value of personal property is determined by the Assessors.

Motor vehicle excise tax is based on the valuation of each registered vehicle, with exemptions for town-owned vehicles and those owned by tax-exempt organizations. Valuation of each vehicle is determined by the state (not the Tax Collector).

Let's consider the various jobs in greater detail.

### Assessors

The job of our Assessors is complex and difficult. They must pin down the

value of all properties equitably, and in accordance with the legal requirements ("full and fair cash value") of the state. Their valuation of each property determines the amount of tax due on that property. Private homes and commercial properties are taxed; government buildings (such as the post office), and non-profit organizations (such as churches and schools) are exempt.

Monterey's Assessors are assisted by our experienced, certified, professional assessor. Those elected to the Board of Assessors agree to take a series of workshops toward their own certification, in addition to their continuing work in town.

Every three years the Assessors must submit their valuation to the state Department of Revenue for certification, and must retain these values during the interim. Every two years the state employs licensed appraisers to figure an equalized valuation of each town in the Commonwealth at full and fair cash value—market value—for the purpose of apportioning various state funds to towns.

After determining the town's total valuation, the Assessors establish the tax rate based on the amount of revenue that must be raised by taxing real estate and personal property, which is the amount by which the budget (approved by voters at Town Meeting) exceeds projected income from all other sources, such as excise tax, permits, fines, and other revenues. The Assessors translate the financial requirements of the town into a fair sharing among taxpayers.

Our current tax rate in Monterey is \$7.58 per thousand dollars of valuation. To illustrate a property tax levy, say the rate were \$25 per thousand; a property valued at \$100,000 would be assessed a tax of  $\$25 \times 100 = \$2,500$ .

The state law known as Proposition 2 1/2 limits revenues that may be raised by local property taxes to 2 1/2% of assessed valuation, and limits increases to 2 1/2% per year, regardless of the levy's relationship to assessed valuation.

Abatements on both real estate and excise taxes may be applied for directly to the Assessors (not the Tax Collector); they send monthly statements on abate-



ments and exemptions to the Accountant. The "overlay," the amount by which property tax levies exceed appropriations and other charges, is limited to 5% of the total levy, and is used to cover abatements and exemptions granted locally or on appeal in deserving situations. Various chapters of Massachusetts law grant exemptions to the elderly, to veterans, and to certain firemen as determined by the Fire Chief.

One observable trend is that our tax structure is shifting to smaller household parcels because there are increasing numbers of non-profit and tax-sheltered properties in town. Another trend emerging in the past decade is increasing state oversight, which necessitated steady professional assistance for our Board of Assessors.

Understanding the growth of Monterey, and respecting its present and future needs in providing vital town services is a challenge for the state as well as our local Assessors.

## Collector of Taxes

Our taxes are calculated by the Assessors, the tax rate is certified by the state then sent to our Tax Collector, who mails the bills. He is responsible for keeping the taxation history of each parcel of land, and for collecting taxes in the following categories: real estate, motor vehicle excise, personal property, utility companies, farms and machinery, and the special classifications of timberland, farmland, and recreational districts. The Tax Collector turns these revenues over to the Treasurer.

The job of Tax Collector demands accuracy and responsibility; in addition, he needs a great deal of tolerance for the many misdirected complaints he receives, and patience with the instructions he must give repeatedly to taxpayers. Monterey's Tax Collector has an enviable reputation for successful collection as well as patience, for which we can all be grateful. To help taxpayer and collector alike, please remember:

- Address your questions about tax bills to the Assessors.
- Address your questions about payment to the Tax Collector.

• The Collector's telephone office hours are 7-9 p.m.

• Changes of address should be reported to the Collector.

• Address applications for abatements to the Assessors. If your application is granted, the new tax is sent to the Collector, who then adjusts your bill.

From the first of January throughout the entire year, the state sends out motor vehicle excise tax bills with commitment to the Tax Collector. He handles these continuously throughout the year, and submits uncollectables to the Sheriff, who usually gets a quick response. Lawyers transferring property must procure the taxation history of that property, and report sales immediately to the Collector. The Collector may initiate law suits or seize property for non-payment of taxes. Perhaps the most frustrating situation our Tax Collector faces is the problem of uncollected taxes from estates, left after death, the ownership of which sometimes remains unclear for years.

## Accountant

Municipal accounting serves three main purposes: it provides for the recording of all financial transactions of town government; it provides reports to local officials and taxpayers on receipt and disbursement of money; and it provides a data base for reviewing town finances. The Accountant also maintains custody of contracts. This amounts to more than bookkeeping; it should be seen as an important tool for improving town government. Annual and easily understood financial reports to the electorate can give taxpayers a picture of how tax dollars are spent and of the financial welfare of the town.

Massachusetts towns are required to prepare financial statements to the standards of the state Department of Revenue, which established the Uniform Municipal Accounting System (UMAS), bringing state requirements closer to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, known as GAAP.

The town Accountant is a completely independent officer, by statute, appointed by the Select Board. She provides monthly line-item reports to keep offi-

cials informed of town finances and potential problems. This monitoring helps insure that revenues (state aid, excise taxes, permits, real estate taxes, etc.) are received on schedule, and that timely payments are made by the town. The Accountant checks bills and payrolls for accuracy, approves and records bills before giving them to the Select Board for signatures, and to the Treasurer, who writes the checks. In sum, the Accountant functions as the controller of the budget.

## Treasurer

The Treasurer is an elected, bonded officer, responsible for very specific duties; she does not exercise political influence. The Treasurer has no office hours, nor does she meet with the public in her capacity as Treasurer. She must function as autonomously as possible, but at the same time is obliged to interact with the Accountant, the Tax Collector and the Select Board.

The Treasurer must have substantial knowledge of finance and banking practices. She administers all town funds and trusts, collects all town monies, and makes deposits in insured Berkshire banks, investing primarily in CDs. She has the power to borrow for the town when necessary, with executive approval.

The Treasurer writes all checks to pay bills, after receiving warrants approved by the Accountant and signed by the Selectmen. After the bulk of the bills are paid (the largest is the annual school payment), save for on-going bills and salaries, the Treasurer seeks bids from banks and accepts the best offer for the town's largest investment.

The town's payroll policy requires employees to submit "short warrants" to the Accountant on the first Monday of each month, listing hours worked. Part-time workers may choose the manner of payment (weekly, monthly, or quarterly) and receive their salaries accordingly. The Accountant approves their warrants, sends them to the Select Board for signatures, then on to the Treasurer, who deducts for health premiums, pensions, and state and federal taxes, then writes and distributes the salary checks. She also



writes the checks for goods and services. The Treasurer maintains a record of all town payments, and files county, state, and federal reports.

Our Treasurer prefers to be in direct contact with the state Department of Revenue in Springfield when she needs information or verifying advice. There are also state-sponsored workshops and courses towards certification available to town Treasurers who want further training and information.

Our Treasurer, together with the Collector of Taxes and the Accountant are the principal fiscal officers of our town.

**The Finance Committee**

The Finance Committee performs a difficult public service without real compensation (as all of our boards do). We quote from the *Massachusetts Finance Committee Handbook*: "Since its power does not derive from its breeding (aristocracy) or its wealth (oligarchy) it should be called a 'timocracy' or 'government of thinkers.'" (cf. Plato's *Republic*).

The powers and duties of the Finance Committee are strictly defined by statute, case law, and the town by-laws. Traditionally, their recommendations to the voters receive a high degree of acceptance.

The *Handbook* describes and defines the work of finance committees as follows:

- Receives monthly reports of present expenses from the Accountant and considers possible appropriations in conjunction with the selectmen.
- Prepares budget advisory and warrant requests.
- Maintains a continuing effort to gather data from all boards, committees and town officers towards preparation of the annual budget... Prepares estimates of amounts deemed necessary for administration of their office for the ensuing year and also estimates income for the town during the next year based on information from the Assessors, the Treasurer and the Accountant.
- Considers statements and estimates filed by other boards, confers with them and can hold hearings if advisable. In order to

verify information, the Finance Committee has authority from the state to investigate the books, accounts and management of any department in town at any time. The Committee should submit forms to other town departments for budget estimates.

• To advise the selectmen on formation of a line-item budget to be submitted to Town Meeting is the major effort of the Finance Committee. They must focus on many categories of spending, such as salaries, town equipment and maintenance, and, most importantly, school costs. The budget is their plan of financial operation embodying an estimate of proposed expenditures for a given period, along with the proposed means of financing them. It is considered "preliminary" until presented to town meeting for approval, and "final" when accepted by the vote of that body. Without an effective Finance Committee, open Town Meetings would probably disappear.

Here are some definitions useful in any discussion of town finances:

- The Fiscal Year is a twelve-month period beginning on July 1, to which the budget applies, and at the end of which a government unit determines its financial position and the results of the budget's operations.
- A Stabilization Fund is one in which, within certain guidelines, money is placed for future use to cover major capital expenses.
- By majority vote at town meeting, money is placed into a Reserve Fund, the sum not exceeding 5% of the tax levy of the current year. A two-thirds vote is required to appropriate monies from the Fund to reimburse various departments or to cover unforeseen expenditures. Such appropriations require the signatures of the Finance Committee and the Selectmen. The Treasurer accepts the warrants and makes the transfers.

Although regular audits are conducted following state mandates, the Finance Committee as well as the Accountant can ask for an audit.

We discovered in our reading of the *Massachusetts Finance Committee Handbook* that a survey was done which concluded that 84% of state finance com-

mittees feel they have a duty to improve the town beyond their immediate budget work, which in a sense gives them only a "back-up" role. They believe they should be involved in every policy decision the town faces, and advise voters, making recommendations on the school board budget, on other budgets, on special articles and referenda.

While its recommendations may not be endorsed, no finance committee should duck any important town issue. They should question special committees, as any serious voter should, for sound facts and thorough study. It should then correlate committee work with other town plans and expenses, and make a recommendation.

(Although this particular material is paraphrased from a survey result, and was not suggested by our own Finance Committee, it is surely a lively, thoughtful, serious approach, and worth consideration.)

The budget and these five related processes constitute the most important check and balance management within town government.

— Melvene Dyer-Bennet  
Vice Chair, Democratic Party





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## CHILDREN'S HEALTH

By now everyone is entering into the holiday spirit. Take time to relax and enjoy everything around you. We quote from The Cornell Cooperative Extension bulletin, *Growing Together*:

If there is an infant or toddler in your family, here are a few safety tips to help celebrations and get-togethers go more smoothly!

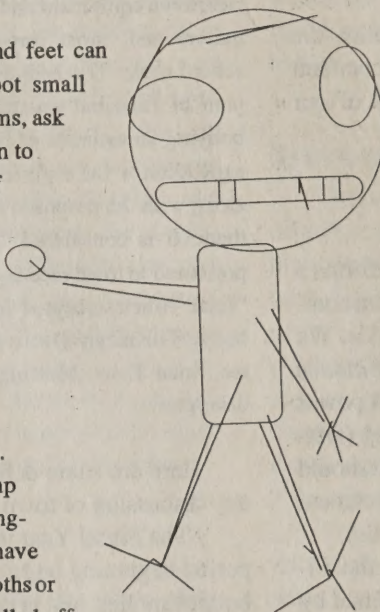
- Little hands and feet can move fast. If you spot small breakable or sharp items, ask your host's permission to move them out of reach.

- Purses and briefcases sometimes contain medications that can be harmful if swallowed. These, too, should be out of reach.

- Watch for lamp cords that can trip youngsters; low tables that have sharp corners; tablecloths or runners that can be pulled off (along with items sitting on them); plants with berries that may be pretty but poisonous; holiday decorations that are not made to play with.

- Close doors to rooms that are off limits, especially the kitchen and bathroom.

- Be aware if there is a pet around who is



not used to small children.

- Stay alert. Don't assume that small children will stay out of trouble. If something looks interesting and he can get to it, or into it, he will, even if you have told him not to!

- Be sure to secure Christmas trees.

A reminder that CHP rents toddler car seats—call us. We also have a free video and book-lending library. New video additions include *Ouchless House*, *Your Baby-Safe Home*, *Child Safety Outdoors*, *Play It Safe* (all obtained with funds from the Governor's Highway Safety Grant through the American Red Cross); *The Before Tour* (for children who need to be hospitalized); *Book Games to Play with Baby*, by Jackie Silberg.

We have begun a service called "Mothers' Afternoon Off" once a month for two hours using volunteers who will baby-sit for children under one year of age. The next Mothers' Afternoon Off will be offered on December 21, 1–3 p.m. at the Senior Center in Great Barrington. If you would like to participate, free of charge, call Claudette to register. We want to be sure we have enough volunteers to care for the infants.

Holiday parties will be held December 13 (Baby's First Christmas, photo with Mrs. Santa Claus, 1–3 p.m., Simon's Rock College Gym, Great Barrington); December 15 (Santa Claus will visit the Great Barrington Playgroup, Simon's Rock College Gym, Great Barrington, 9:30–11:30 a.m.).

Because we expect to be indoors more during the winter months, it is a good time to visit local libraries and obtain books to read for ourselves as well as our children. Playgroups can sponsor book exchanges to help spread the variety of books and the enjoyment of reading to children. Parents can exchange books, too.

Happy holidays, and thank you for your help!

— Claudette Callahan

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## ON THE ROAD AGAIN

### Alabama and Birth

A friend and his son helped me unload the U-Haul into my "guest barn" I put up last March. I put the two chests up in the loft, chests I had made for my two sons when they were little. The long walnut chest (from my New York City apartment) I put against the stairs. The two copper lamps and two pine tables (from my barn in Westport, Connecticut) I placed on either side of the big old woodburning stove (from Maine). Along each wall I put well-used beds from my Monterey house, on blocks...covered with new comforters and oodles of pillows—couches by day, beds by night. I sat down among the things I have lived with for thirty years! Very nice...all here in Alabama! My three dogs and my cat (running up the loft and MY GRACIOUS jumping down) seem to like being here with me. AND SPEAKING OF DOGS...

Daughter Yorkie, Lady Sue (all of four pounds) didn't want to eat last Sunday. Laid on the couch all day, looked funny. I looked her over: there was a little head sticking out! I pulled and pulled, Lady howling. Finally out—so cold...just lying there. When you have a life in your hands, it takes some quick thinking. I put a wool sweater around her and called the doctor. "Do what you do to babies, Joan.

Hang her upside down and briskly rub her back." She finally let out a faint squeak. I put her to nurse. She sucked a little, no milk. She stopped...so weak. The doctor again. "Skim milk, warmed, in an eye dropper." I raced through the fog to get the milk. Back home, she was still warm. All through the night I fed a little bit at a time. In the morning at the doctor's, she was merrily sucking. Mother and puppy were happy. (This little pup is a "Yorkipoo," sired by—surprise!—my seven-month-old toy poodle.)

On Wednesday, Mother Yorkie, Honey Bear, lost her dinner. I thought...well. At 9 p.m. I saw the rear end of a puppy trying to get into the world. I gingerly pulled a BIG girl out. She was sucking in two minutes, with the mother licking her dry. At 10:30 a little boy (coming the right way) made his appearance and found a place to suck. At 2 a.m., a tiny boy slipped easily out, climbed over the other two, and found his place.

Funny thing, Lady in her box at the end of the room knew something was going on (why, I wondered). Lady left her baby and tried to get into the mother's box. Maybe she thought these were hers? The two mothers growled at each other. I put Lady's box in the bathroom and shut the door.

The mothers wouldn't, just wouldn't, leave their babies. So I served them wa-

ter and food in their boxes. They ate ravenously! I said good night to the box on the couch, and the box in the bathroom, and tumbled wearily into bed!

You wonder about the miracles in life. Those little mothers knew just what to do (people mothers need a book, need a doctor...get a baby-sitter and go out on the town). As I watch, the four little three-inch bundles of black fur (eyes still closed) fight for a nipple. THE WILL TO SURVIVE!

Last night in the bathroom I saw TWO puppies in Lady's box. She had, unobserved, carried one of her mother's pups in to her OWN box. She has only one, and the mother has THREE. Well. Now I keep the door shut.

Every day the three little all-Yorkie pups, and the one little Yorkipoo, change SO much, and I have the good fortune to be here watching!

—Joan Woodard Reed

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## WHAT IT TOOK TO BIRTH EZRA DOV

*Gifu Mountains, Japan, December, 1993*

*Endure the Warsaw uprising a rifle to  
your head*

*Witness the dying lamentations of the  
Hebrews;*

*Ritual immersion in Lake Garfield*

*With bare hands coax fertility from the  
rock hard soil*

*Welcome ancient spirits.*

*Climb Bash Bish Falls to break water*

*Shofar blast on the Day of Atonement;*

*Faith of the midwives, nameless sisters*

*Prayer of desperate eyes*

*Caress your inflamed nipples*

*Blood boiling, cursing, agonizing death  
wish*

*Rend the air with the sounds of your  
voice:*

*Moan of the lover*

*Chant of the Sioux*

*Ululation of the Bantu*

*Scream of the tortured*

*Keening of the Shaman*

*Om of the Sadhu*

*Inexorable, excruciating pain, courage  
and sweat*

*Brings forth fruit*

— Michael Marcus

## FROM THE CHINESE

*What my eyes and ears perceived  
all last year while I was  
detained by  
official business.*

*I thought this over;  
the whole world was  
detained by official business,  
the dust of a groping world:*

*My constant soul is  
blinded  
and I cannot  
my soul is a ten thousand foot  
stand.*

*My soul is blinded  
and  
i cannot  
shake it away.*

*I thought this over:  
the duty of the world is peace...*

*A thousand foot wide  
weary with groping for hold.*

— Betsy Bennett





## EXILES

*Should we open the mountain  
to let the sun out  
and are there not jewels  
on the tongues of lizards?*

*So many treasures in the prisons close  
though we who are free are now the captives  
outside the rumors, the promises, the riches  
and the bars of pain*

*may I bandage your crowbar  
which is bleeding  
with bloods of dandelion?*

*Demeter in the meadow grey  
in the ashen morning  
mewling on the cliffs of light,  
Kore is crunching sunseeds listless  
picking at carbuncles  
and mother crying for the dimpled arms  
or thought she Hades promised her the garnet night?*

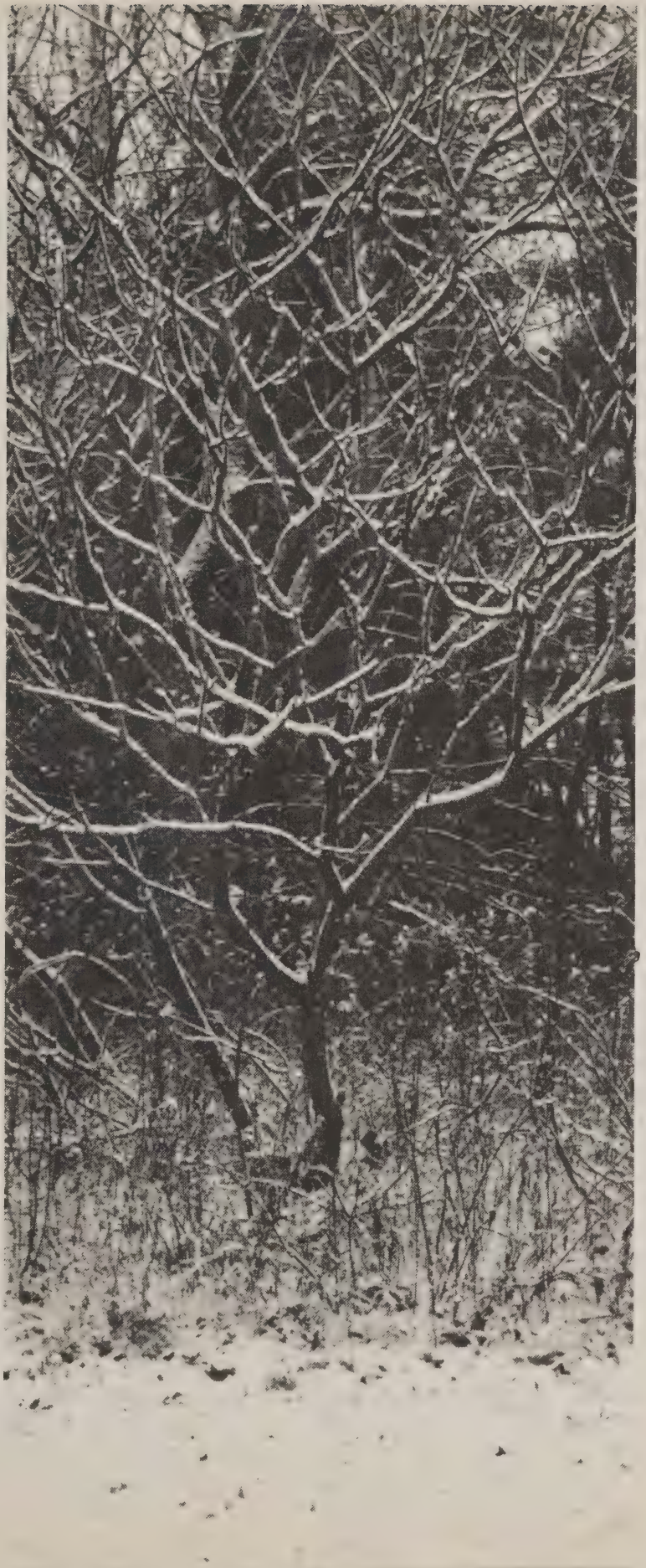
*earth has such dark pockets dry  
to pick with fingers' brittle bone  
until our dusted notions  
are deathed alone*

*Kore will not play the harp betrayed  
nor Demeter count the  
petaled dithyrambs of hope*

*"He loved me, he loved me not—"  
such a frail tune in winter!*

*yet what a gift be darkness  
and what a gift be hell  
should dark prove love invited here  
as sound was once  
to heaven's flower-clouded  
bell—*

— A. O. Howell



MAGGIE LEONARD



## WILD TURKEYS: THE LEGEND AND THE BIRD

Turkeys have been on record in Massachusetts for a million years, having first shown up in the Pleistocene epoch when they looked about the way they do now. Then, as now, they ate nuts and berries, grasshoppers and a few snails. They were long-legged birds of the open woods and they hadn't much to fear, in terms of continuation of the species, until 1620, which was a time of many changes around here.

We have our first written accounts of the wild turkeys from just about that time. William Wood of Massachusetts wrote in 1629:

The Turkey is a very large Bird, of a blacke colour, yet white in flesh; much bigger than our English Turkey. He hath the use of his long legs so ready, that he can runne as fast as a Dogge, and flye as well as a Goose; of these sometimes there will be forty, three-score, and a hundred of a flocke, sometimes more and sometimes lesse; their feeding is Acornes, Hawes, and Berries, some of them get a haunt to frequent our English corne: In winter when the Snow covers the ground, they resort to the Sea shore to look for Shrimps, & such smal Fishes at low tides. Such as love Turkey hunting, must follow it in winter after a new falne Snow, when hee may follow them by their tracts; some have killed ten or a dozen in halfe a day; if they can be found towards an evening and watched where they peirch, if one come about ten or eleaven of the clocke he may shoote as often as he will, they will sit, unlesse they be slenderly wounded. These Turkeys remaine all the yeare long, the price of a good Turkie cocke is four shillings; and he is well worth it, for he may be in weight forty pound.

I like William Wood for his note about the shrimp and the dog, but to say the turkey is "black of color and white of

flesh" is what I'd call an economical description, not to say inaccurate. Let me add a few phrases from Edward Howe Forbush who wrote of turkeys in 1912. By this time the big birds once so numerous in Massachusetts were competely "exterminated or extirpated" here, due to habitat destruction but even more to the market hunting, that four shillings per bird. The last native Massachusetts turkey was shot on Mt. Tom in 1851. To see a turkey in 1912, Forbush probably had to travel west to New York state. Here are a few phrases from his identifying



descriptions of turkey feathers: "body plumage generally brilliant metallic bronze, with gold, green and red reflections, each feather broad, square-ended, and tipped with a black band; rump black with dark purple metallic gloss; upper tail-coverts chestnut with metallic red reflections."

Turkeys are huge, four feet long with a wingspan of sixty inches. They have the longest tailfeathers of any native American bird, and when he fluffs himself up for ceremonial purposes the tom turkey or "gobbler" triples his already respectable, resplendent bulk. He fans his tail in an instant, moving each feather with delicate precision, using tiny skin muscles. His wings droop and he rattles the quills of his wing-feathers to produce an irresistible clicking sound.

As if his strutting and swelling and tail-fan were not enough, the gobbler

flashes changes in face makeup from white to blue to purple to pink and then deep red. His face above the bill is decorated with warty excrescences called caruncles and his wattles hang below. A generous flap of skin called a snood drapes rakishly over his bill and it can not only change color in a second but also grow much longer! This is only, in the language of biology, a "secondary" sexual characteristic for the turkey, but what he does with it might be envied by many.

The tom turkey is a personal artist. Once his show is over, he has nothing to do with marriage or family life. The hen chooses a nest site, sometimes in company with another hen or two, and lays about a dozen eggs. Joint nests may have as many as forty-eight eggs in them. After twenty-eight days the chicks hatch and spend the next four weeks roosting under the mother's body, wings, and tail. She shows them how to find food. Family groups join each other to make bigger flocks, sometimes forty to fifty, sometimes much larger.

William Wood of 1629 noticed the white meat of the turkey. On Thanksgiving the carver asks the guests, "Light meat or dark?" meaning breast meat or legs. The breast meat of a bird is actually its wing muscle, and in turkeys, chickens, and grouse this muscle is pale due to a lack of blood vessels. I don't know which came first, the lack of blood vessels or the inability to fly far, but none of these white-meat birds can fly "...as well as a Goose," which has dark breast meat. It's not enough to have big muscles; there must also be good blood supply to deliver fuel to the cells, and to take away waste.

Turkeys have a fascinating history of extirpation and reintroduction here in New England. They are also possessed of a wonderful food processor called a gizzard which can exert 400 pounds per square inch of pressure, and can bend a sewing needle without getting perforated.





MAGGIE LEONARD

## MONTEREY · BUILT 1958

The gizzard is full of small rocks for grinding.

These days some people find turkeys laughable, but Benjamin Franklin, that inventor, philosopher, and sage, proposed the wild turkey be elected our national bird. American elections being what they are, the turkey lost by one vote in Congressional ballot. Still, you never know when things may turn around. Anybody that can come back from extinction and eat sewing needles, and dresses in metallic bronze with gold, green, and red reflections can have my vote, even if he can't fly much.

— Bonner J. McAllester



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## BIDWELL FAMILY HISTORY: FIRST CHRISTMAS

Many people assume that Christmas has always been celebrated in America. Take one look in the December issue of *Colonial Homes* or *Country Living*, and you see many eighteenth and early nineteenth century homes, some of which are museums, decorated for the season. Many of these museums know better, but they continue to decorate for the holiday to please their audience. The Bidwell House, for instance, decorates, although we hand out flyers at the door explaining that the decorations are in a colonial manner, not authentic. In reality, Christmas was not

celebrated in New England until the mid-nineteenth century. The farther you got from the large cities, the longer it took for this holiday to take hold.

When the Puritans arrived in the New World, they brought with them a simple, fundamentalist religion which they believed was closer to the Bible than the Church of England, with its large, decorated churches, elaborate ceremonies, and celebration of many holidays which the Puritans believed had pagan sources. Christmas and Easter were just another day to these early settlers. Brief mention was made of their religious significance in the Sunday worship service, nothing more. This practice continued throughout the eighteenth century.

The increase in immigrants from Germany during the nineteenth century led to the celebration of Christmas as we know it. First to adopt the holiday and its trappings were people living in big cities such as New York or Boston. Slowly it filtered to the country through immigrants or visitors from the city.

A remarkable letter was found this winter in the Bidwell Family Archives at Yale University. The letter is dated December 29, 1856. It was written by Marshall Spring ("Blue") Bidwell, Jr., to his first cousin and future wife, Alice Cecilia Bidwell<sup>1</sup>. Alice was away from her home (The Bidwell House) visiting friends in Cleveland. He wrote:

The great event in our monotonous life—I might say, the pudding stick which has been stirring our steady mush-like existence—has been our Christmas party. Lamenting the deplorable ignorance of Monterey on this important subject (your father<sup>2</sup> did not even know when Christmas came; and the school was open on that day, just as usual) we have endeavored to introduce that delightful festival into these benighted regions. Moreover, a Christmas Tree—the first one of those beautiful exotics so common and so thoroughly naturalized in New York, that has ever blossomed or borne in this inhospitable [sic] clime—has actually graced our humble parlor. The venerable and benevolent Santa Claus has therefor obtained a fair footing in Monterey.

It may interest you to hear that our company numbered 43. It included all our

cousins (Sophia<sup>3</sup>, Dr. John<sup>4</sup>, and Johnny Welch<sup>5</sup> among them) ...all the invited were present notwithstanding a furious wind storm of driving snow. A small 'fruit' from the tree was entrusted to Sophia to be sent to you.

Thus Monterey's first Christmas was celebrated in 1856, thanks to a branch of the Bidwell family living in New York City, with a country house in Monterey. Blue's father and the party's host was Marshall Spring Bidwell, Sr., a grandson of Reverend Bidwell and a prominent attorney in New York. In August of 1856 Marshall Sr. had bought a country home which still stands today at the corner of Fairview and Beartown Mountain Roads, across from the Parade Grounds. Today this is the home of Maria Carvainis and Ian Jenkins.

During this busy holiday season, it is nice to look back to 1856 and imagine their Christmas party in a driving blizzard, complete with Christmas tree decorated simply with "fruits" and the happy time which was had by the Bidwell family and their guests.

— Lisa Simpson

1. Marshall Spring Bidwell, Jr., and Alice Cecilia Bidwell, first cousins, were married in 1866. They lived in Sheffield for a time, before moving to Elmira, New York. After Marshall's early death in 1877, Alice returned with her one daughter to live at Lake Farm with her cousin, also named Marshall Spring ("M.S.") Bidwell.

2. John Devotion Bidwell, the third owner of The Bidwell House, was Alice's father. He was a tanner, farmer, and Justice of the Peace.

3. Sophia, born Phoebe Sophia Bidwell, was Alice's older sister. Like her sister, Sophia married her first cousin, "M.S." Bidwell of Lake Farm!

4. Dr. John Welch Bidwell, older brother of Alice and Sophia Bidwell. Their mother, Luna Selina Welch, came from the famous Welch family of doctors in Norfolk, Connecticut, which no doubt inspired Dr. John to his calling.

5. Johnny Welch probably was a cousin from Norfolk up for a visit.

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## WILDLIFE SURVEY

*This survey records events from late September into mid-November.*

### Mammals

Clayton Amidon reports nearly a dozen deer around his grandparents' place on Sandisfield Road. He has also seen lots of gray squirrels and a couple of raccoons (early November). A high population of gray squirrels has been noted elsewhere in town, and they are still falling prey to the traffic on Route 23. Ron Kimberley found a dead weasel by the road in Sheffield in October. Connie Ohman hears coyotes frequently around his place on Blue Hill Road, and saw one on the road to Sheffield on the morning of November 15. Other deer were seen (and heard!) at night by the Baker/McAllesters in early November on Route 23 and Hupi Road. The beaver pond at the east end of Lake Garfield continues to rise in response to the lake drawdown, and there's much cutting of alder and other small trees for the winter food supply. Muskrat houses have appeared on the edges of the new lake level.

### Birds

Thirty to forty turkeys appeared in Dowd Meadow for several days, and wood ducks have been visiting the nearby pond. David McAllester watched his domestic ducks keep a wary distance from the gorgeous visitors November 14 and 15. His ducks were doing some fancy, and instantaneous, diving a couple of weeks earlier when a large hawk flew down at them repeatedly. Herons have been seen patrolling the waterways up to November 15. Pairs of gulls, mergansers, and ospreys were making their fall visit November 3 and 7. The big flights of migrating geese seem to be over, but a good number of visitors are still feeding in local fields and ponds. Three robins were feasting on the bear berries (black alder) at the east end of Lake Garfield November 15.

Loul McIntosh reports bird doings at Gould Farm. "September 22: A great blue heron on the back pond and at the

old swimming hole on Wellman Road. Many, many migrating flocks of birds. Among them a flock of phoebes, obviously on R&R, having a rollicking good time, upside down, inside out, chasing each other through the lilac bushes like a bunch of seven-year-olds playing hide-and-seek. A group of chipping sparrows this morning, peacefully and busily feeding for about fifteen minutes. They were joined by a couple of juncos. The catbirds have just left, I believe. After a few years of almost none at all, there were several around who raised young ones. The hummingbirds were last seen September 8.

"October 29: The woodpeckers (downy) are back. They are eating shelled sunflowers...maybe for the simple reason that I put the sunflower feeder where the suet usually is—it's still too early for suet. November 5: The birds are coming back to the feeders; the woodpeckers, downy and hairy, are content to make do with shelled sunflower seeds, as do the chickadees, purple finches and house finches. The blue jays come to the big feeder and throw down enough seed for the ground-feeding critters: white-throated sparrows, house sparrows, juncos, and one starling."

Huge flocks of blackbirds have been seen on maneuvers over the town: Eleanor Kimberley estimates there were more than a thousand over Town Hill Road November 15.

### Insects

Our principal informant is Loul McIntosh. "September 22: My solitary twig nesters, bees and wasps, have largely hatched. I shipped a number of them to daughter Margrit, but let the remainder fly free... There have been wasps, flies and spiders in the woodshed. The Monarchs in the milkweed under the office windows all hatched and departed a few weeks ago. A second hatching of caterpillars has just finished the metamorphosis, and there are several chrysalises again on the clapboards, plus a couple in my woodshed, getting ready to abandon their caterpillar nature. October 22: The insect world was busy. On a white mum plant I found honey bee, wasp, hornet, tiny bee

and ladybugs. The house wall facing south was covered with the latter, with spots numbering anywhere from two to seventeen. October 29: A darning needle and in between those days one more Monarch and a white spotted tussock moth. November 1: The last Monarch hatched in my house. I had brought her in as a caterpillar, fed her, watched her form a chrysalis. When it got too cold in the woodshed, I brought her in. Within twenty-four hours the green color turned to brown and a butterfly emerged. I let her fly the next day, knowing full well she was not going to make it to Mexico."

### Plants

Bottled gentians were in their glory in late September. Ladies tresses were still blooming in late October, as were the witch hazels. There were unusual late blooms: violets on south slopes,impatiens and nasturtiums at Gould Farm (September 22). As of September 24: Asters, turtleheads, bladder campion, brown-eyed Susans, evening primroses, silver rod, red berries of jack-in-the-pulpit, white baneberries (the red ones were long gone), fall color in the mountain laurel: last year's leaves turned bright yellow, sarsaparilla leaves turned gold, ash leaves were faun colored and bronze. By October 29 the leaf colors were passing their peak, and a few days later the hills were turning russet (oaks) and grey, offset by the evergreens. The last colors were the soft brown of larches, the red haze of bear berries in the swamps, and the silver gleam of the dried blossoms of wild clematis. Close to the ground the wild strawberry and ground blackberry leaves are having (November 15) their own foliage postlude.

### Fungi

In late September a remarkable growth of some four or five hundred honey mushrooms festooned a big hemlock stump in the McAllesters' woods. Alice Somers, who confirmed what they were, was, of course, the author of the report on fungi in the October News.

— David P. McAllester



## TALES FROM TEXAS

### Flash!

Last month's story was written in December of 1993. Today, nearly a year later, in early November, Brian and I are a week into our second deer-hunting season and light years away from the hardship and primitive living that pervaded the early months of business start-up and ranch rejuvenation. We have had a chance to get a working perspective on some of Texas' most intriguing eccentricities. For instance, *The Weather*.

Central Texas is a meeting ground for humid, subtropical breezes from the Gulf, arid blasts from the Southwest, and dry, windy cold from the Midwest. The result is what an optimistic little book called *Gardening Success with Difficult Soils* calls "an 'anecdotal' climate more easily characterized by its extremes than by its mean conditions." This same book describes a succession of "brutally cold 'nothers,' rain-bearing 'gully-washers,' and searing summer heat and drought," and proceeds to advise gardeners on how to cope with them. I should have read it sooner.

In summer here the temperature in the kitchen of our farmhouse is ninety-five degrees at bedtime and drops to ninety by morning. I once hung a laundry load of bedsheets out on the line on a windy day, and by the time I got to the last sheet, the ones I hung up first were not only dry, but the wind had blown the hems out of all the top sheets. By the time things cooled down last November, my garden and I were as dried out and frizzled as those sheets.

Texas lightning is a fearsome and enthralling spectacle. It bespangles the big sky in cannonading cyclorama. It sends dogs scuttling under the bed and melts answering machines. Years ago it killed a K Bar palomino eerily named "Powder." A month ago it dropped a lease cow where she stood sheltering under a cedar bush and burned the bush to a crisp. Our former ranch foreman told me he once found a cow in the Northwest Pasture black as toast, whose horns and hooves had been blown yards away from her body.



BRIAN FEARON

Lightning figures in many accounts of oldtime cattle drives. Some of the most vivid are in J. Frank Dobie's *The Longhorns*:

The electricity played along the horn curves "as if they were lightning rods," at the same time darting around and illuminating spurs and bridle bits. Balls of foxfire ran around the wet brim of a cowboy's hat. Then the balls danced like pairs of spook-eyes not only on each head of horns out in the distance but on the ears, always working now, of the cowboy's horse. If he popped his quirt, sparks would fly out of the cracker, and the switching of a cow's tail emitted the same sparkling. "Snakes of fire" sometimes ran over the backs of the cattle and along the manes of the horses.

Accounts of the effects of Texas blizzards are not nearly so engaging. In *The Great Roundup* Lewis Nordyke describes winters in the 1880s when cattle in blinding snowstorms "crashed off bluffs, walked straight into bogs, piled up in ditches." Cattle walked out on thin

ice, broke through and drowned, froze, or were trampled to death. Nordyke and Dobie both tell how cattle herds drifted into fences in sleet and snow. After a storm in the winter of 1884-5, Dobie says, "the fence lines were marked by tens of thousands of frozen bodies."

Brian and I drove sixty miles north to my mother's house last November for Thanksgiving, usually a crisp day that lends itself to an afternoon of touch football in the yard. We crawled along Interstate 35 in four-wheel drive, beset by ice and sleet and wincing at Texas drivers spinning out, right and left. As dangerous as they are infrequent, these storms, nevertheless, call forth none of the consoling plows and sanders so readily provided in the Northeast. Cameramen for the evening news position themselves high on metropolitan expressway interchanges and film trucks and cars doing horrific slow-mo donuts and sliding ineluctably into each other at rush hour.

A decade or so ago, an expensive bull owned by the K Bar stood innocently (and, no doubt, amazed) in a rare



snowfall deep enough to freeze his testicles. Although otherwise intact, the bull was forced to join the ranks of the unemployed.

The combination of unpredictability and ferocity in Texas weather seems to leave its people and its livestock in a state of doomed paralysis. I recently had a conversation with a friend, born and raised in Texas, whose career as a Park Architect has taught her to design landscapes which will survive capricious weather, and who is still not sure where she should shelter in her house during the next tornado watch.

Last June I tore out of the local paper a reminiscence about the effects of a northwest wind which brought "the highest temperature ever in Texas" to a twenty-five-mile stretch near Lake Whitney, about seven miles from K Bar Headquarters. It was June 15, 1960, and the temperature was in the seventies. Without warning, in the night hot winds hit at speeds estimated at 80 to 100 miles per hour. The temperature jumped to 100 degrees in minutes. Fire sprinklers were set off, car radiators boiled over, and mothers wrapped their children in wet sheets to keep them cool. Cotton fields were carbonized; cornfields were scorched and wilted. The highest reading of a thermometer was recorded to be 140 degrees around midnight.

In the harvest season of 1991 my family's and everybody else's cotton crops rotted in the fields because there was so much rain no equipment could get in to collect it. Sometimes I think it's no wonder Texans don't plan ahead.

Next time: K Bar's fall roundup and old-time stampedes.

— Miss Ellen

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## THE OBSERVER - OCTOBER

October was a dreamy month this year in Monterey. Two degrees cooler on average than last year here in town, but drier by more than 2 1/2" of rain, which seems like plenty. We heard people say that the dry weather made for less spectacular foliage, but how does one measure that from one year to the next? Did this year's dry air smell sweeter? We fall back on measurements; here they are:

High temp. (10/8) .....	69°
Low temp. (10/12) .....	28°
Wind-chilled low temp. (10/3) .....	18°
Avg. high temp. ....	58°
Avg. low temp. ....	36°
Avg. temp. ....	47°
Monthly norm. (Pitts.) .....	48.4°
Precip. occ. ....	9 days
Total precip. ....	1.64" rain
Monthly norm. (Pitts.) .....	3.26"
High bar. press. (10/12) .....	30.54"
Low bar. press. (10/1) .....	29.75"
High humidity (10/9) .....	90+%
Low humidity (10/16) .....	35%
Avg. wind speed .....	2.5 mph
High wind gust (10/2) .....	24 mph



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## House Sitting

Leo got back from California in the middle of November. He was gone for more than two months, time enough for the change of season to waft over us here at home. It was the gentlest passage I can remember, the sun warm and strong day after day while the leaves floated down and darkness spread into normal worktime. "Oh, yes," murmured the soft air in our ear. "It will get cold, and that wind will blow. Yes, you will curse your clothing and dread the touch of your own cold hands—but not now, there's still time. See? It's warm out now. There are nice things about winter. Remember?"

It wasn't the California weather, but the emotional component of Leo's trip to the monastery that gave him voices in the head. He left glad to go, thinking he might move altogether, enter once and for all on a pure life of work with his tools. But getting out there he felt agitated, exposed. I think what scared him was not the loneliness, his small size in the world, but the power of his roots back here, which he felt by leaving. In his letters he hissed at himself about being adrift, and a jack-of-all-trades. The white noise faded after he had been at the monastery a while (he was gone over two months), and he got to know some of the

others working on the place, as well as one of the monks. He liked the work.

Valya was house-sitting for him—friends for dinner now and then, cooking smells in the kitchen, open doors and windows on all those warm days. It's good for a house, and for its absent owner. Of course, things can go wrong either way, but a presence always seems better than an emptiness.

Valya lives in Provincetown, and she was hungry for a varied landscape the way Leo gets hungry for sky and the ocean living here, and visits her on the Cape. She first came to the Berkshires from New York City years ago to work as lighting director at Jacob's Pillow. When the Pillow closed for the season she stayed, giving up her New York apartment, and soon found work as a deejay at the old Pittsfield radio station, WGRG. Leo and Valya met at a Bonnie Raitt concert at the Music Inn; they left together and stayed that way for a few years, sharing a house they rented before Leo bought the farmhouse in Monterey. They came apart kind of suddenly, as they had come together, around the time that WGRG folded. Valya moved to the Cape, but she and Leo are still close.

She said she came to house-sit on account of the light here, to watch the

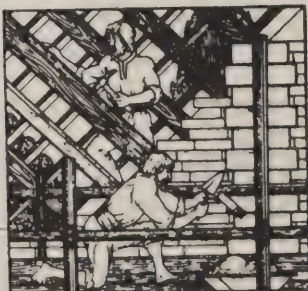
grass and leaves that catch and hold it slowly disappear, until bare branches scatter the low sun and the hilltops look like ragged combs. Sunlight careening through the open, cold air, let loose. Valya says Cape light gets good press, but it's elemental—air, water, fire. She came here for complicated light; that's what she says. I believe her. Stage lights are pretty crude tools, if you compare the effect with that of sunlight on the earth. Valya can't help studying these things. She might better have been a painter, but she likes technical stuff, electricity, also the loopy theater life. She had a paying project underway here with some Berkshire dancers at the same time, so it wasn't all light-as-romance.

The day Leo was to fly back from California, Valya called to say she had to go to Provincetown sooner than expected. Would I pick up Leo? I said sure.

Riding back from Bradley Leo and I talked about the baths he built around hot springs at the monastery. Now he wants to build a sauna here, not in the basement or the barn, but a place apart, a small, thick, wooden structure—hewn logs—with a porch and a roof of slate or stone, almost like a child's house but windowless—a vault for heat. I told him it had to have a window, small and thick like the rest, but a window, just one, positively. We agreed on the location, in the woods above his house, next to a spring-fed trickle that often dries up in August. Maybe a rainbarrel will supply enough water in summer.

As we walked into Leo's kitchen sometime after eleven, the Bach suite for unaccompanied cello, number one, suddenly poured from the sound system in the other room. Valya had cued it up to start playing when the light was switched on, her presence in the house, her welcome home. She left pages of notes on the kitchen table, too, a diary of the light. Leo read it through several times during the next few days, catching up with the place, settling in again. He seemed glad to be home.

— Peter Murkett



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## MONTEREY GRANGE

The Monterey Grange No. 291 met November 2, when the theme was Thanksgiving. Lecturer Mary Wallace gave an interesting and informative report on the state Grange session at Worcester October 27—29, where she was a voting delegate. Monterey hosted Berkshire South Pomona Grange No. 25 on November 9.

At the meeting on November 16, members played Pirate Bingo. The fund raiser was a success: Josephine Oransky won a gift certificate from the Monterey General Store, Tillie Butler won a gift certificate from Price Chopper, Mary Wilber won a gift certificate from Ward's Nursery, Susan Anderson won a package of cheer from Domaney's Liquors, Raymond Butler won a basket of groceries, and Loren Stuccio won fifty pounds of potatoes from Taft Farms.

Next meeting will be held on December 7. Members are asked to bring articles for cheer boxes in preparation for Christmas.

— Fraternally,  
Mary Wallace, Lecturer

## CONTRIBUTORS

Our thanks to these readers:

Cathy Roth & Vicki Reed  
Mark D. Mann  
Arthur & Alice Somers  
Art & Kitty Hastedt  
Michael & Nancy Marcus  
Nicky Hearon

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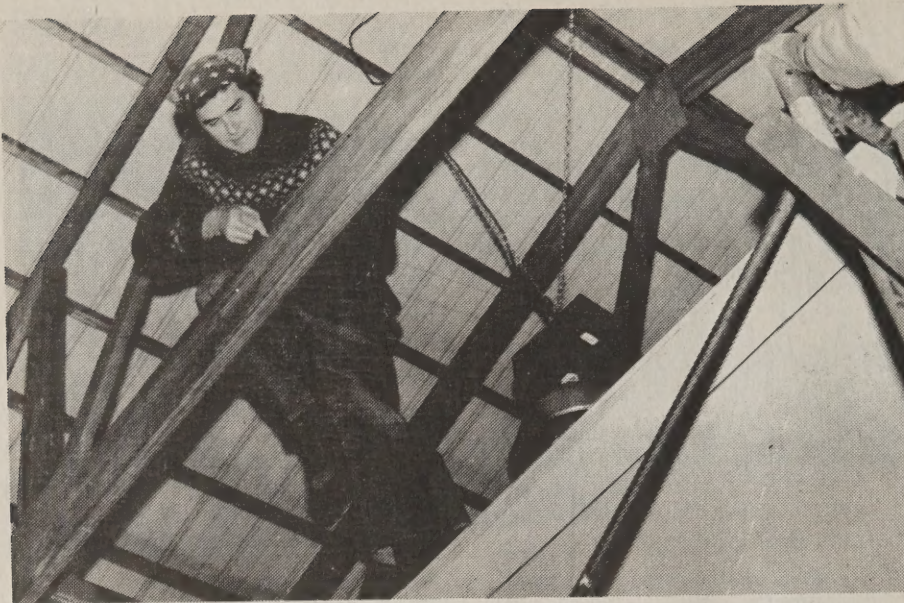
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Wayne Dunlop installing lights for the skating rink in the rafters of the Fire Company pavilion.

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## PERSONAL NOTES

Our hearty congratulations to Michael Marcus and Nancy Richards-Marcus on the birth of their son, Ezra Dov Marcus. Ezra was born at home on Art School Road September 16, weighing in at 7 lbs. 15 oz. and measuring 21 inches long. The new family is thriving, and Ezra "is very much a Virgo and growing as you write this," according to his proud Dad.

Our hats are off to Monterey realtor Linda Hebert, who was elected president of the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce at their recent meeting to elect officers and board members for 1995.

Best wishes for a speedy healing go out to Mike Mielke III after recent surgery for a badly broken ankle suffered in a motorcross accident. Mike has returned to his studies at Monument Mountain and looks forward to ditching those darned crutches!

Very happy birthday wishes to Stefan Grotz on December 1, to Matthew Christopher on December 2, to Graham and Madigan Hines on December 3, to Elizabeth Deloy, Walter Andersen and Karen Schulze on December 5, to Simon Spagnoletti on December 7, to Mike Mielke III on December 8, to Natasha Grotz on December 12, to Stacy Ingner and Morgan Clawson on December 20, to Donald Amstead on December 25, and to Eloisa Dean Shapiro and Eliana Gottlieb Schulze on December 27.

And to all of our readers, wishes for a wonderfully joyful holiday season.

Please continue to share news items, birthdays, etc. Contributions are appreciated! Just jot items down and drop them in the mail to me, Route 23, or give me a call at 528-4519. Many thanks!

— Stephanie Grotz



## CALENDAR

**Sundays, December 4, 11, and 18** AA meetings, 9 a.m. in the Monterey Firehouse, Main Road.

**Mondays, December 19, 26, January 2, etc.** Ice skating instruction for all ages and abilities, Monterey skating rink at the Fire Co. pavilion, 6-7:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, December 7** Meeting of the Monterey Grange No. 291, 8 p.m. at the Grange Hall.

**Saturday, December 10**

New Marlborough/  
Monterey PTA Holiday  
Craft Fair at the New  
Marlborough Central  
School in Mill River, 10  
a.m.-3 p.m.

**Friday, December 16** Annual holiday perfor-

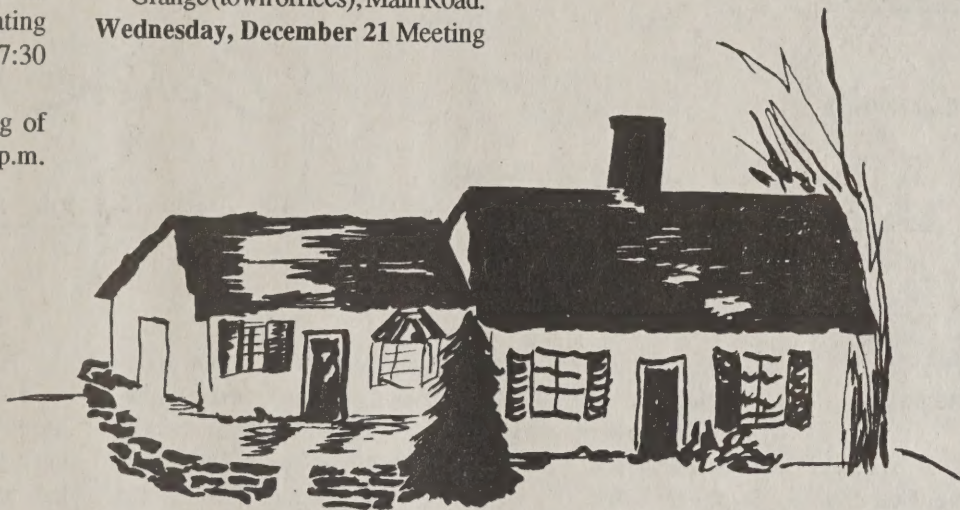
mance by choral groups from Gould Farm and Farrington House at Main House, Gould Farm, 7:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, December 20** Free blood pressure clinic, 9-10:30 a.m. in the basement room of the Monterey Grange (town offices), Main Road.

**Wednesday, December 21** Meeting

of the Southern Berkshire Solid Waste District, 7 p.m. in the church basement.

**Saturday, December 24** No square and contradance by Mountain Laurel.



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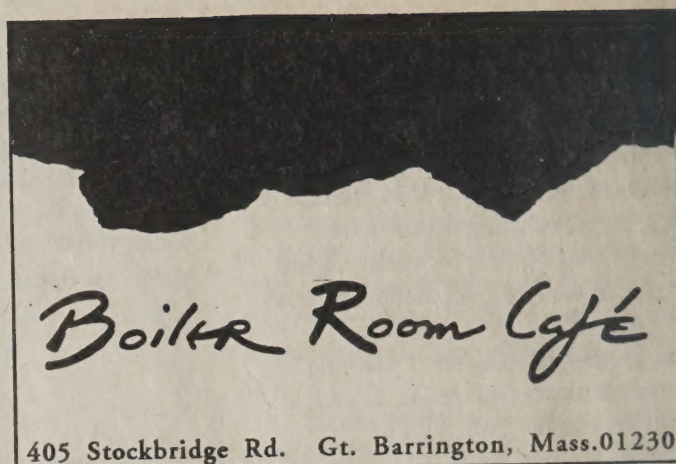


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We invite readers to submit news items, opinions, stories, poetry, drawings and photographs. Editorial material must reach the editor by the 15th of the month before publication. For detailed information, call the Editor at 528-3454.

For changes of address, or information regarding subscription to the *Monterey News*, call our Business Manager, Susan LePrevost, at 528-4595 not later than 8 p.m.

For complete information about advertising in the *News*, contact the Editor at 528-3454.

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*Contributions from local artists this month: Joe Baker, p. 14; Sudi Baker, pp. 6, 9, 15; Erika Crofut, pp. 7, 12, 22, 23; Pete Murkett, p. 20; Riley Murkett (with Apple Macintosh), p. 10.*

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